

# Assessing 40 Years of Group Vitality Research

Chairs: **Richard Y. Bourhis**, Université du Québec à Montréal, and **Itesh Sachdev**, SOAS, University of London

Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) defined *vitality* as that which makes ethnolinguistic groups likely to behave as distinctive/active collective entities. Demographic, institutional control and status factors measured using census and sociolinguistic indicators make-up the *objective vitality* of minority/ majority language communities in contact. *Subjective vitality* are perceptions of how language groups perceive the relative strength of their language communities using the *subjective vitality questionnaire* (SVQ; Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal, 1981). Objective/subjective vitality is used to account for a broad range of behaviours including language attitudes, additive/subtractive bilingualism, code switching, linguistic mobilisation, language maintenance/shift/death. Smith, Ethala & Giles (2017) noted that 1,900 articles published in 180 journals across 40 years have used the vitality framework, with 45% of such publications using variants of the SVQ. In this symposium, Bourhis offers a classic vitality account of how three French Canadian communities mobilized in favour of their own group vitality using the *Ego-vitality scale* while monitoring how they perceive French vs English internal migrants as contributing or not to own group vitality using the *Contribution to vitality scale*. Sachdev proposes the *Vitality of Urban Multilingualism* (VUM) framework to help account for the individual plurilingualism flourishing in world cosmopolitan cities. Ehala reviews key theoretical issues related to the vitality construct and proposes the *Extended subjective vitality model* as an emerging unified theory of vitality. As discussant, Giles points to future research directions.

## Perceptions of French Canadians toward English vs French inter-provincial migrants contributing to in group vs outgroup vitality

**Richard Y. Bourhis**, Université du Québec à Montréal

Questionnaires were completed by French Canadian (FC) undergraduates: majority Québécois Francophones (n=204), minority Acadians (n=227) and Franco-Ontarians (n=227). All FC respondents identified positively as Francophones while declaring stronger language skills in French than English and using more French than English. On the Ego-Vitality scale, FCs were more willing to personally mobilise to improve their own vitality than outgroup English Canadian (EC) vitality. FCs in each province felt more threatened by the presence of EC than FC migrants and much preferred FC migrants than EC migrants. On the Contribution to Vitality scale, Francophones from each provinces felt that FC migrants contributed much more to their own group vitality than did EC migrants who were seen as bolstering rival outgroup vitality.

## Towards a Vitality of Urban Multilingualism

**Itesh Sachdev**, SOAS, University of London

Multilingualism, an overlooked ancient phenomenon, remained so until the growth of modern nationalism and one-nation-one-language ideologies. Recent increases in the mobility of internal/international migrants, especially to urban centres, has refocused attention on urban multilingualism. The Vitality of Urban Multilingualism (VUM) is defined as the degree to which

societal multilingualism and individual plurilingualism are able to thrive and flourish in urban conglomerations. VUM is introduced and discussed under three main headings: demography, status and institutional support. Data on multilingualism in reports from the LUCIDE project ([www.urbanlanguages.eu](http://www.urbanlanguages.eu)) are discussed using the VUM framework. These data suggest that a more explicit intergroup analysis may be warranted given the “us” vs “them” perceptions concerning VUM obtained in key European Union cultural settings.

## **Towards a unified theory of vitality**

**Martin Ehala**, University of Tartu

According to Sign Theory of Identity (Ehala 2018), members’ emotional attachment to their collective identity is a key variable that influences group’s readiness to engage in collective action. The actualization of this mobilization is affected by acculturation expectations, the perceived strength of outgroups, perceived intergroup discordance and objective/subjective vitality. Recent theoretical elaborations have been proposed to explain these interactions including the Web model of vitality (Ehala, Giles, & Harwood, 2016). Despite substantial research devoted to understanding vitality, the theory remains to be consolidated. This presentation analyses alternative theoretical models of ethnolinguistic vitality, focusing on their commonalities and points of disagreement with the aim to create a ground for the emergence of a unified theory.

## **Group Vitality Research: future trends**

**Howard Giles**, University of California Santa Barbara

Based on a review of research on group vitality, social identity and self-categorization theories, the Web model proposes that high subjective vitality is the consequence of high levels of six psychological parameters. These are emotional attachment to group identity, boundary impermeability, ethnocentrism, perceived strength of ingroups, perceived illegitimacy of intergroup power relations and perceived level of intergroup distrust. The Web model predicts that high levels of these parameters should lead to the emergence of hot identities characterized by high subjective vitalities. Research testing this and emerging models of vitality should incorporate quantitative/qualitative approaches such as discourses of vitality in face-to-face encounters, electronic/social media, while meta-analyses of existing vitality studies can help test competing models of group vitality.